

ROBIN HOOD

CHAPTER 1

Trouble at Treeton Mine

Every day at Treeton Mine was terrible, but today was worse than all the others. Clouds of black smoke covered the sky. Everywhere people lay hurt or dead. The terrible explosion at the mine was still sounding in people's ears.

Rowan found his father. He was sitting by the body of his uncle and crying.

'He's dead, Rowan. They're all dead.'

Rowan pointed at some men on horses. They were riding towards the mine. 'Look, Father. Here's Gisborne. Please tell him. The mine is too dangerous. We can't work here anymore.'

Sir Guy of Gisborne was dark and good-looking but his eyes were hard and cold. He got off his horse and looked at all the dead bodies. Rowan's father ran to him.

'We're not going to work in your mine anymore, Gisborne. We can't. It isn't safe. Make it safe and we'll go back to work.'

Gisborne was angry. 'You work when I tell you!' he shouted. 'Or do you want to join your brother?'

A man on a white horse was coming towards them. He had small, dark eyes and a strange smile. Everyone hated this man, the Sheriff of Nottingham, because he did terrible things to the poor. Only King Richard could stop him. But the king was fighting in the Crusades near Jerusalem and knew nothing of the troubles in England.



Slowly, the Sheriff got off his horse. 'I hope you're not giving these people a choice, Gisborne,' he said softly.

Gisborne looked at him. Then he took his knife and pushed it into the miner's body. Rowan couldn't believe it. His father fell onto the grass, dead.

'Very good,' said the Sheriff happily. Then he turned to the miners with a small, thin smile. 'Enjoy your free time. You've lost your jobs. Goodbye.' He started to walk away.

Gisborne followed him. He didn't understand. 'But we need miners. We need the iron ore from the mine,' he said.

The Sheriff smiled again. 'Don't worry, Gisborne. I have a plan! We will have miners. New miners.' He shouted at the men. 'They will have work tomorrow. And you won't!'

Gisborne smiled too. 'Take away these bodies,' he said to the miners. 'You will not work. You will not get food. And I will kill anyone who tries to help you!'



Robin Hood was smiling. He was always happiest when he was practising archery. It was quiet under the trees and the light danced over the grass. His friends Much, Allan, Will and Little John were all sleeping near the fire. In his sleep, Much reached out his hand. Robin took an arrow and carefully pointed it at Much. It flew between Much's fingers.

Much woke up and looked angrily at Robin. 'I knew it!' he said. 'You want to go to the silver arrow competition in Nottingham.'

'No, I don't,' said Robin, and he shot another arrow into a tree. He was easily the best archer in the area. 'I don't care about the competition. Who wants to win a silver arrow?'

'Good,' said Much. 'Because we've got to find food, cook it and eat it. We haven't got time to die in Nottingham!'

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Rowan stood outside the church with his mother and the families of the other dead miners. They were putting the bodies into big holes. It was raining and the sky was grey. Rowan held his mother. 'They will pay for this, Mother,' he said quietly.

Suddenly someone in dark clothes rode towards them. Who was it? Rowan couldn't see the person's face because it was covered.

The rider threw a bag of food on the grass.

'You mustn't help us!' cried Rowan. 'Gisborne will kill you. His men are everywhere.'

Without a word, the rider turned the horse and rode away.



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Gisborne was waiting by the road. He saw everything. As the rider was leaving the mine, he jumped out in front of him. The horse stopped suddenly and the rider fell onto the road. Gisborne pulled out his knife.

'You work for Robin Hood, don't you?' he shouted. 'Where is he?'

The rider said nothing.

'You'll talk to me soon,' continued Gisborne. 'Or do you want to die?'

Gisborne ran at the rider and cut his arm with his knife. Still the rider didn't speak.

'No voice! Not even "ouch!"?' laughed Gisborne.

Suddenly the rider hit Gisborne hard and he fell down. When he got up, he was too late. The rider was gone.

Gisborne was very, very angry. 'Does he think he can escape me?' he thought. 'He's made a big mistake! I'll find him. And then I'll kill him.'

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Robin was shooting more arrows at the trees. Little John smiled. 'He really wants to win the silver arrow,' he thought.

Suddenly one of Robin's men appeared. It was Will. 'Quick, Robin! We've got one! A cart's fallen into our hole!'

'Let's go,' cried Robin and they all ran through the trees. The driver, a big fat man, was trying to push his cart out of the hole. He was red in the face and he was shouting angrily. Then he saw Robin and his men. They were all pointing arrows at him.

'Alright,' said the driver. He knew the stories about Robin Hood and his men. The poor people loved him but he was very unpopular with the rich. 'Here you are, Robin. I haven't got anything else.' And he threw a small bag onto the grass.

Much opened the bag. Inside there was a piece of glass. 'Very pretty,' he said. 'But we can't eat this!'

Then they heard a strange sound from the back of the cart.

'Horses?' asked Robin and he pulled back the cover. The back of the cart was full of men. They were locked in. Their faces were dirty and they looked tired and hungry. Robin looked into the big, brown eyes of a young boy.

'Take one,' said the driver and pointed at the men. 'They'll work for you. They understand a few words.'

For a moment Robin and his men just stood there in surprise.

Then Robin looked at the driver. 'Who are they? Where are you taking them?' he asked angrily.

'They're new workers for the Sheriff's mine,' the driver answered.



'I don't believe it,' said Much quietly. 'They're slaves. The Sheriff is buying people.'